Stuart Clark, Town Creek Foundation
John Quinn, Constellation Energy
Co-Chairs, Steering Committee
Maryland Commission on Climate Change

Dear Stuart and John:

On behalf of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR), I am pleased to offer the following input into the Climate Commission’s November 2015 report to the Governor and the General Assembly. Our comments focus on recommendations specific to the General Assembly’s reauthorization in 2016 of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA) and on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act Plan.

These comments supplement the many comments, both verbal and written, already submitted by members of CPSR to the Climate Commission. Our comments address four areas: setting goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; promoting clean renewable energy; reducing energy usage; and building carbon sinks.

1. Set Goals to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Avoiding the most severe outcomes of climate change will require that industrialized countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by between 80% and 95% by 2050. Because Maryland is one of the states most susceptible to climate change, Maryland should be at the forefront of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically, we recommend that a reauthorized GGRA should:

   • Reaffirm the state’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent from a 2006 baseline by 2020.

   • Include the Maryland Department of the Environment’s tentative recommendation that the state establish a goal of 45% reductions by 2030.

   • Set up a process and short timeline for the state to develop a 2050 goal for greenhouse gas reductions. The process should be based on the
principles of sound science, and it should afford the opportunity for all residents and communities to be involved in this effort.

2. Promote Clean Renewable Energy: In 2013, Maryland’s coal-fired power plants accounted for 44% of the state’s energy production, while together solar and wind accounted for only 1%. Coal-fired power plants harm the health of Maryland residents. They are responsible for a large portion of the state’s greenhouse gas emissions, toxic air pollution, and NOx and SO2 emissions. In addition to coal, Maryland also relies on other dirty energy sources, such as incineration and black liquor.

To increase the use of clean, renewable energy and reduce the use of dirty energy, which would in turn improve the health of Maryland residents, we recommend that the Commission ask the Governor and the General Assembly to:

- Phase out all state subsidies of power plants that use fossil and combustible fuels. This would include amending laws and regulations that create indirect subsidies, such as those that allow coal-fired power plants to operate in the state without modern pollution control technologies, and those that classify greenhouse gas emitting fuels, such as black liquor and incineration, as a tier one source of energy under the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS).

- Raise the RPS to 25% by 2020 and increase the solar carve out from 2% to 2.5%, and, as part of the process for developing a 2050 goal for greenhouse gas reductions, to develop long-term options for further strengthening of the RPS.

- Expand efforts to promote community solar programs, solar usage in K-12 schools, and solar projects that offset municipal energy usage. These programs are valuable educational tools and will likely have strong educational effects in the communities benefiting from these sources of energy.

- Support a long-term moratorium on unconventional natural gas development in Maryland to allow for a greater understanding of the climate and health risks posed by production, distribution and use this fossil fuel.

3. Reduce Energy Usage: Energy efficiency programs save money and create jobs. Using less energy will greatly reduce air pollution and improve public health. To build on the Maryland Public Service Commission’s recent decision to require electric utilities to achieve specific annual energy reduction goals, we recommend the state:
• Continue to expand energy efficiency programs in state buildings and departments.

• Develop programs for installation of efficiency measures in multifamily dwellings and low-income communities.

• Maximize its use of the Clean Energy Incentive Program under the Clean Power Plan for efficiency programs in low-income housing.

4. **Build Carbon Sinks**: Soils with a rich diversity of microorganisms play a critical role in sequestering atmospheric carbon captured during photosynthesis. To take advantage of this, the state should develop a program to improve the ability of the state’s soils to act as a carbon sink. This would be a win-win from a health perspective, as the steps required to build healthy soils, such as the elimination of pesticide use, would also enhance the quality and quantity of healthy foods available to Maryland residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the work of the Climate Commission.

Sincerely,

Tim Whitehouse
Executive Director